

Preparation for health professional students' practice in rural and remote primary health care settings

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How prepared are health professionals to work in rural and remote primary health care settings and what type of preparation is necessary for them to be effective and culturally safe practitioners?

It is well known that there are many challenges working rural and remote; including working cross-culturally; an aging work force, high staff turnover and variable provision of appropriate education and training. Anecdotally, it appears that there is still quite a gap between the education and training that received at undergraduate level and the requirements of the specific work context. There also often appears to be a 'dis-connect' between the theory in the curricula and the practicalities or realities of the health professionals' role.

The author's PhD research is on preparation of health professionals working in Indigenous primary health care settings. This paper explores part of the research project which is to talk with students enrolled in a Rural and Remote Health unit about the preparation they believe that they need to work in rural and remote health. What are the motivators and deal breakers? Does it include factors like placements, lecturers, and/or explicit units in the curriculum? The research also examines strategies around developing the capacity and resilience of students from enrolment to graduation and transitioning into the rural and remote workforce.

The outcomes or the conclusions reached from the research will contribute to the development of appropriate curricula in the short term and hopefully better retention and preparation of graduates in the longer term.